

Attachment #2

GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT COUNCILS

Background

The State of New Jersey has long recognized the need to create an integrated, coherent system of workforce development programs and services that effectively prepares New Jersey citizens with career path employment and that meets the labor market requirements of business. For youth, this means creating a unified policy and interlocking system of supports that recognizes the unique needs of young people and appropriately prepares them for life-long learning and employment success.

Youth Investment Councils have been a key strategy for addressing the special workforce needs of youth in New Jersey. These Councils, subcommittees of local Workforce Investment Boards, have focused particularly on identifying and meeting the needs of New Jersey's disadvantaged youth. These have included high school drop-outs and those at risk for dropping out; adjudicated youth, youth residing in low-income Abbot Districts and those faced with the challenges of teen pregnancy.

As the State re-examines its strategic direction and vision for working with young people, it has determined that Youth Investment Councils have been a valuable asset to local planning efforts. While the Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act does not appear as if it will require States to continue Youth Councils, New Jersey believes that they should continue as a part of local Workforce Investment Board functions. At the same time, to adapt to changing economic, social and political conditions, the work of Youth Investment Councils must necessarily be re-focused to continue to appropriately serve our State's youth, as outlined below.

Mission

The Youth Investment Council is responsible for developing a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated system of youth services that effectively prepares local young people for higher education and future employment. It does so by:

- Developing and communicating a strategic vision for how the local area will ensure that its targeted youth are adequately prepared for education and employment opportunities. This vision is comprehensive and provides for educational, employment and supportive service resources.

- Engaging in ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders—businesses, schools, youth providers, parents and youth themselves—to identify local needs and gaps in service and to map available resources.
- Forging strong partnerships with the K-12 system, providing resources about careers and labor market information and ensuring that youth and parents have the information they need to make informed choices about their education and future employment.
- Setting service priorities and determining how local resources can best be used to meet the needs of young people.
- Setting standards of service that clearly communicate high expectations, accountability and a focus on youth customers. These standards integrate best practices in youth and workforce development and focus specifically on ensuring that youth have the opportunity to develop career plans that will engage them in life-long learning and future employment.
- Developing policies grounded in best practices for youth that support the State and local vision.
- Coordinating local resources, programs and policies with Federal, State and Regional initiatives to make the most effective use of funds.

In developing its youth system, New Jersey is specifically targeting young people, ages 14-21, who face significant barriers to future success, including out-of-school youth, adjudicated youth, young people enrolled in or aging out of foster care, homeless youth, children of incarcerated parents, migrant and seasonal farm worker youth and other youth at risk.

Guiding Principles

In accomplishing its mission, each Youth Investment Council will incorporate the following principles:

- **A Comprehensive and Holistic Vision of Youth**—The Council recognizes that the most successful programs provide comprehensive services designed to address a wide range of youth needs. While the specific mission of the Youth Investment Council is on workforce development programs and services, it maintains a focus on the larger picture, developing standards and policies that support providing youth with access to all the services they need to be successful in school and at work.
- **Customer-Focused Programs and Services**—Effective Youth Investment Councils know the needs of their local young people and they engage these target customers in ongoing dialogue about the problems they face and how various programs might help. Their standards and policies reflect a consistent

focus on services that “add value” for young people and that incorporate practices proven to be effective with their target populations.

At the same time, Youth Councils recognize that employers are another key customer of the system, so they work extensively and pro-actively with businesses to identify skill needs and future trends. This job market information informs decisions about educational and employment programs and how to best prepare youth for future opportunities.

- **High Expectations/High Support**—Quality youth programs set high expectations for their youth customers and provide them with appropriate support in meeting those expectations. They know that lowered expectations result in lowered achievement and that high expectations with little support cause youth to become discouraged. In setting standards and developing local systems, Youth Investment Councils must maintain a relentless focus on this message of achievement and support.
- **Accountability**—Effective Youth Investment Councils integrate accountability into all facets of their work. The standards they set for services provide clear, measurable and specific information about expectations for quality. Stakeholder roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and both individuals and organizations are expected to stand by their commitments. Continuous quality improvement is an ongoing focus for both the Council and local providers.
- **Focus on Asset Identification, not Problems**—Local policies and strategies reflect a focus on identifying the components of youth success and on building upon those assets. Programs and services help youth see possibilities and opportunities, not insurmountable challenges and barriers.
- **Focus on Being Pro-Active, not Reactive**—Through ongoing dialogue, community-building and networking, the Youth Investment Council is able to anticipate trends and opportunities and to plan strategically for the future.
- **Connecting to and Building Upon Existing Programs and Services**—Standards, policies and priorities encourage building upon existing programs and resources. As the architect of the overall vision, the Youth Investment Council ensures that local efforts connect to existing One-Stop system services and to other successful initiatives in the community and the State.
- **Building Local Capacity**—The Youth Investment Council takes a leadership role in developing the capacity of local organizations to meet the needs of youth. These efforts include identifying gaps in service and brokering community relationships to meet those needs. Capacity-building also focuses on ensuring that youth are connected to caring, competent adults who are knowledgeable about their needs and who care about their futures. Leveraging public and private

resources and connecting a wide variety of service providers through collaborative partnerships are also key strategies.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Youth Investment Council's mission requires it to assume the following roles and responsibilities:

- Working with local stakeholders to establish a comprehensive vision for youth services that will effectively prepare local youth for educational and employment opportunities.
- Convening local stakeholder groups on a regular basis to collect data on future needs, successes, and the challenges the area faces.
- Developing policies and standards that pro-actively address youth needs and that communicate high expectations of quality to youth providers.
- Playing a leadership role in advocating for at-risk youth and in brokering funding and resources from public and private entities that expand the capacity of the system to provide appropriate services.
- Fostering collaborative community relationships that expand services and that support the local and State strategic vision for youth services. Asset and resource mapping, relationship-building and ongoing engagement of local employers and service providers are important strategies for ensuring implementation of the youth vision.
- Conducting active outreach to businesses and to local educational providers—including colleges and universities—to more effectively engage them in the process of developing appropriate program standards and expectations for youth performance. This involvement allows the Council to better articulate specific educational and skill outcomes and to identify the most appropriate strategies for preparing youth for the future. As part of the employer engagement process, special attention should be paid to developing business mentoring opportunities and partnerships so that youth can have access to successful community role models and first-hand information about the world of work.
- Developing standards and policies that protect against duplication and fragmentation of youth services and that ensure youth are able to access the full range of services necessary to support their success. Connections to the local One-Stop and to existing community programs are built into program standards and expectations.
- Developing standards and performance objectives for all components of youth programming so that youth providers have a clear understanding of expectations and requirements.
- Preparing a comprehensive Strategic plan that embraces the above. Planning Guidelines will be provided by the SETC.

*NOTE—The State has determined that is not appropriate for the Youth Investment Council to be involved in the selection and procurement of and contracting for specific youth services. This will be the responsibility of the WIB and the One-Stop Operator in accordance with their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Youth Investment Council Membership

Youth Investment Council membership is representative of the various stakeholders in the community and the specific needs of local youth. Because preparing youth for future education and employment is the primary purpose of Youth Investment Council activities, it is important to have representation from business (particularly in demand occupations), educational institutions, critical youth service providers and community and faith-based organizations that have access to youth.

State and local workforce development services and policies are to be demand-driven and responsive to the needs of businesses. Therefore, 25% of Youth Investment Council members will be key decision-makers from business and/or organized labor representing the industries and companies that provide the bulk of job opportunities.

Some Youth Investment Councils may choose to include parents and youth on the Council, as well. Whether this is the choice or not, Youth Investment Councils should include in their plans a provision to conduct quarterly focus groups with targeted youth and their parents to help determine needs and identify successes and problems. This customer voice is critical in developing solid Youth Investment Council policy.

In determining the overall size of the YIC, the WIB should consider both the need for broad representation and the importance of having a manageable number of members to achieve the Council's vision. Although discretion for the size of the Council lies with the WIB, the State recommends a membership of between 24-30 members.

Multi-county WIBs may want to expand their membership to assure equitable representation from each county. A possible solution might be to rotate membership between counties in the required categories to achieve a workable Council size.

Required Youth Investment Council Members

WIB Representation:

- WIB Business members (representative of the demand occupations)
- Vocational School Superintendent or county superintendent or representative
- County College President or representative
- One-Stop Operator
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Representative from organized labor or apprenticeship program

Education/Youth Agency Representatives

- Representative(s) from other local colleges and universities'
- Comprehensive school district superintendent or representative (where applicable, from an Abbott district)
- Advocate for youth with disabilities, such as the Statewide Parents Advocacy Network (SPAN)
- Youth Corps representative
- School-based Youth Services
- Adjudicated youth agencies (Juvenile Justice, Juvenile Court Probation Services, Family Court, local law enforcement, etc.)
- Youth Services Commission Representative
- DYFS
- Community and/or Faith-based Agency
- Job Corps (if applicable)
- Local public housing authority representative
- Representative from substance/alcohol abuse agency

Discretionary Members (based on local needs)

- Youth Transition Coordinators
- Adult High School Principal
- YouthBuild Director
- Supported employment agency director
- County Transition Coordinator
- Director of county-wide transportation agency
- Advocate for youth migrant/seasonal workers
- Advocate for immigrant populations
- County Arts agencies or cultural institutions that operate youth programs
- PAL
- Recreational Departments
- Volunteer Youth Agency, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Teen parenting/pregnancy agency director
- School-based Service Learning Director

Youth Investment Council Planning Process

Each Workforce Investment Board is being asked to provide a comprehensive plan describing their vision for workforce development activities and services. As part of that process, Youth Investment Councils will be empowered by their Boards to develop the plan for youth in their area. The youth plan should clearly be connected to the overall plan, demonstrating how youth will be provided with access and opportunity as part of an overarching vision for developing the area's human capital.

At a minimum, plans should include descriptions of the following:

- The YIC's comprehensive vision for ensuring that ALL young people in their communities are adequately prepared for and will have access to the education, training and career path employment they need to become self-sustaining contributors to their communities. This vision should reflect thorough and specific knowledge of the needs of local youth and of the skills necessary for success in post-secondary education and in demand occupations.
- The basic skills (reading, math, computer literacy, etc.) and qualifications that local youth should possess in order to access post-secondary educational opportunities and entry-level jobs. These should reflect an understanding of business needs and of typical requirements for post-secondary education and training.
- The YIC's priorities of service:
 - Targeted youth to be served, including relevant needs and characteristics, the size of the population and the numbers to be served. Priorities should reflect the demographics of the local area, as well as the strategic priority of serving out-of-school youth.
 - Targeted occupational areas, including employer needs and expectations in key industries and in both for-profit/not-for profit sectors. This should include entry-level and basic (reading, math, etc.) skill requirements
- An inventory of the programs and services currently available in the community to serve youth. There should be evidence that the YIC has engaged in some kind of outreach or asset-mapping, or has plans to do so, to ensure that this list is comprehensive.
- Gaps in services and unmet youth needs, with plans to address those needs, including how services will be coordinated among various agencies and providers.
- How the YIC plans to engage the K-12 system to ensure that youth and their parents have the information and resources to make informed educational and occupational choices and for youth to be adequately prepared for self-sustaining employment.
- The YIC's overall service strategy
 - How will it connect youth to the One-Stop system and services available through One-Stops?

- How will it incorporate State and Federal youth programs, including Youth Corps and Job Corps? How will the YIC ensure that youth are considering ALL available options during their exploration of services and that youth are being appropriately referred among various youth-based programs?
- How will the One-Stop system adapt to the specialized needs of youth, particularly the target populations it plans to serve?
- How will schools, youth service providers, faith-based organizations and community organizations link to the system?
- How the YIC plans to reach targeted youth—what specific outreach strategies will be used? How will youth and key decisionmakers in their lives (family, teachers, counselors, etc.) become educated about options for youth and how will youth be engaged in appropriate programming?
- Standards of service for the major functions:
 - Outreach and Recruitment with targeted youth populations.
 - Comprehensive Assessment Process, including Intake/Eligibility
 - Career Exploration and Planning, including development of a career plan and Individual Service Strategy
 - Case Management and Counseling Support
 - Programs and Services—
 - Education/training, including academic, occupational skills, workplace literacy/job readiness training, etc.
 - Supportive services
 - Mentoring
 - Leadership training and support
 - Employment Facilitation, including job search preparation, job placement/development, and ongoing retention and advancement supports

NOTE—Standards should describe what determines “quality” delivery of the function—for example, what does a quality comprehensive assessment process look like? Standards should reflect the guiding principles and the YIC mission.

- How will the YIC evaluate the effectiveness of WIA-funded programs and services? How will it ensure provider accountability and performance?
- How will the YIC leverage existing programs and services from non-WIA-funded sources to provide youth with a full range of service options?
- What strategies will the YIC use to be pro-active, not reactive to the needs of local youth? How will the YIC ensure ongoing two-way communication among all stakeholders?

- How will the YIC work with local providers to build their capacity to meet the needs of youth? What training will be provided? What strategies will be used?